



# KFOR Prep

Story and Photos by Heike Hasenauer

*Soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division's 3rd Brigade, in Vilseck, Germany, deployed to Kosovo in November and December to replace soldiers from the division's 2nd Bde., from Würzburg, Germany, who had been among the first to enter the war-torn region.*

*Before the follow-on units deployed they underwent rigorous training at the 7th Army Training Command's Combat Maneuver Training Center in Hohenfels, Germany. Military officials in Europe said 3rd Bde. soldiers, who honed their skills at CMTC for the third time in about a year, had a distinct training advantage.*

**"S**ERBS" shouting obscenities, throwing bottles and, finally, threatening to "kill," egged the Americans on for hours.

They pushed aside the soldiers' barbed-wire barrier and more than once encircled them, squeezing in closer, pushing and prodding them and, finally, pinning one of the soldiers on the ground and reaching for his weapon.

Some of the Serbs slipped through the Americans' defensive positions up on a hill. Others fled through the woods when the soldiers refused their demands.

The platoon of armed soldiers from the 1st Inf. Div.'s 3rd Bde. warned the two dozen or so agitated men and women to get back, but to no avail. Finally, the soldiers called in a quick-reaction force to ward off the civilians.

SSG Ernest Hudson, a member of CMTC's permanent party-OPFOR, said: "In every scenario, the OPFOR plays up its part. Our job is to kick the BLUEFOR's butt, because if we can teach them to deal with more than they'll actually face in real-life situations, they'll be better prepared."

In the scenario, the Serbs tried to stop a United Nations convoy carrying supplies to a "Kosovar village," protesting that the Serb community



**SGT Jared M. Cox, an M1 tank crewman with Company B, 163rd Armor, prepares to engage "hostile forces" during his unit's pre-deployment training at CMTC.**

*Pre-deployment training at the Combat Maneuver Training Center helps Kosovo-bound soldiers hone their skills under realistic conditions.*





**A 1st Inf. Div. soldier shields his "injured" comrade from a hostile civilian during CMTC training that replicated actual events in Kosovo.**

had not received the same aid and that the checkpoint should be removed to provide them access — even though no Serbs lived in the village or had any business there.

"The training shows the soldiers how quickly a situation can escalate out of control," Hudson said. "Observer-controllers check to see that soldiers don't compromise their security to detain protestors or other hostile forces, and that no one kills anyone in anger.

"When people are closing in on you, shouting vulgarities and throwing

things, it's easy to lose control," Hudson said. "The first day we did this, U.S. soldiers 'killed' three Serbs. That would be an international incident."

"Training in this urban terrain site is valuable because this is what I'll be doing in Kosovo," said SGT Darren Brown, a 2nd Inf. Regt. Bradley gunner.

"We'll be police, rather than soldiers. We don't plan on using the Bradleys," Brown said. "We plan to do our mission dismounted. Here, we're actually learning to tone it down a bit,

because we typically train for high-intensity combat."

The 15-day mission-rehearsal exercise incorporates individual, small-unit and combined-tasks training to enhance soldier skills up to task-force level, said CMTC spokesman CPT Jeffrey Cuiper. In other scenarios, the OPFOR plays Kosovars, or another group, and the action revolves around vehicle or personnel searches, among other things.

CPT Lee Fleming, commander of Co. B, 2nd Bn., 2nd Inf. Regt., had three platoons in the replicated Kosovo town. Some of the 120 soldiers in his unit manned the company's 14 M2 Bradley fighting vehicles, which occupied checkpoints within the city and practiced the reporting procedures they'd use in Kosovo.

"Today, two 'bodies' were found in a school," Fleming said. "No one has admitted any knowledge of the murders. And, if that's not bad enough, we've found mines in town, and we're working an issue involving a Kosovar family moving into an abandoned Serb home."

It's the third time in a year Fleming's unit has trained at CMTC, he said. Initially scheduled to be the first brigade into Kosovo — when U.S. military officials anticipated a forced entry would be necessary — the 3rd Bde. was held back to continue training for high-intensity combat and the division's 2nd Bde. deployed as the peacekeeping force, said 1st Inf. Div. spokesman CPT John Clearwater.

About 2,500 3rd Bde. soldiers deployed to Kosovo before Christmas. They form the bulk of the U.S. force now in Kosovo, Clearwater said.

And they're among the best-trained forces to enter the area to date, said U.S. military officials. For one, the original Task Force Falcon commander in Kosovo now commands the 7th ATC, which encompasses CMTC. And, since the first units deployed to Kosovo, all of CMTC's trainers have



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spent some time there to determine the best possible training scenarios, Cuiper said.

Some of the division's commanders participated in command post exercises at CMTC to gauge their reactions to day-to-day events in Kosovo. "And battalion commanders slated to replace other battalion commanders spent time in Kosovo to better understand the departing unit's mission," said 3rd Bde. commander COL Clinton T. Anderson.

All company commanders also traveled to Kosovo before their units deployed, to live there for a week, Anderson said. "They came back with a greater perspective.

"When 3rd Bde. trained in March 1999, we didn't know what to expect," Anderson said. "We didn't know if the Yugoslav army would still be there. As we continued to train for a ground war, the Yugoslav units all left."

"When pre-deployment for the first troops into Kosovo began, we didn't

know whether the soldiers would be walking into a major shooting war," Cuiper said. "So we used Bosnia as a model to design training. Kosovo, we have since learned, is not like Bosnia.

"Bosnia is like 'Fortress America,' where everything's located in one place," Cuiper continued. "In Kosovo, platoons are spread out all over the place to protect different areas."

"Kosovo is much more unpredictable," said 1st Inf. Div. commander MG John P. Abizaid. "While different religious groups exist in Bosnia, they share a culture. That's not true in Kosovo.

"But the single most important difference between the two regions is that there's no police force in Kosovo, although the country is very slowly building a U.N. police force that will ease the requirements on our MPs."

Much has been learned since 3rd Bde.'s initial pre-deployment training at CMTC early in 1999.

"Today the training is much more



**Tank commander SSG Marvin E. Fletcher of Co. B, 163rd Armor, keeps a wary eye on advancing "protestors" outside a simulated Kosovo city.**

realistic, and is based on what leaders and observer-controllers have seen downrange," said 3rd Bde. senior trainer LTC Robert Varela.

"Normally, it's the 'clash-of-the-Titans'-type thing at CMTC, with armor against armor, and conventional weapons and aircraft," Varela said.

"Now we're applying lessons learned from other peacekeeping missions — from Bosnia, Haiti and Somalia — and sharing tactics, techniques and procedures," Varela said. "Then we do things like insert a Kosovar majority or a Serb minority into scenarios to prepare our soldiers to react to real-life situations."

Pre-deployment training for soldiers en route to Kosovo focuses on such things as how to operate checkpoints, interdict the flow of illegal weapons, monitor criminal activity, use interpreters and perform crowd control, Anderson said.

"We talk about the international governmental and non-governmental organizations that have a significant presence in Kosovo, because many young soldiers have not worked with such organizations before," Anderson said. "And we talk about the message we want to send to the Kosovar people. We're the first military force that's extended its hand to help them establish a safe and secure environment."

BG Ricardo S. Sanchez, the new



**Soldiers of the 3rd Bde. stand guard outside their unit's command post in a CMTC training area used to simulate the Kosovo town of Gnjilane.**





**PFC Clifford R. Svob, a sniper in the 2nd Inf. Regt. scout platoon, keeps a close eye on “enemy” forces moving toward an American position.**

TF Falcon commander in Kosovo, said all soldiers assigned to the task force “face anything from peace operations to high-intensity conflict. The volatility of the situation requires that soldiers be able to transition from one end of the scale to the other, where the rules of engagement become critical.”

Sanchez said soldiers in Kosovo must be ready to do everything from conduct security patrols and law and order missions to provide medical assistance and run fire departments.

During the recent training, 700 soldiers from the 1st Bn., 4th Inf. Regt., played Serbs, Kosovars, aid representatives, U.N. officials, criminals and others. Five villages constructed over the 20-kilometer training area replicated parts of Kosovo, including the Army’s two base camps, Bondsteel and Monteith.

Towns within the “box” were given the names of towns in Kosovo’s American Sector to familiarize soldiers with the area’s landmarks, population and troop positions. Two hundred Hungarian citizens portrayed civilians on the battlefield. A few acted as foreign reporters, while V Corps soldiers from Germany played their real-life roles as camera crewmembers.

Following one fictitious meeting between 3rd Bde. commander Anderson and the general of the Kosovo Protection Corps — formerly the

*The CMTC training prepares soldiers to go to a variety of different sites and handle many different situations.*

Kosovo Liberation Army — the media converged on Anderson.

“The KPC tries to get Anderson to commit to its demands,” said Varela. The KPC general wants weapons, and Anderson diplomatically says ‘No.’”

“We’re taking two steps back to go one step forward, because this is where the big incident can occur,” said observer-controller SFC Dennis Franklin. “We forget that one small incident can become an international incident.”

The CMTC training prepares soldiers to go to a variety of different sites and handle many different situations, Franklin said. If they make a mistake at CMTC, it’s OK. They can change it. In Kosovo, they can’t.

OCs see all kinds of responses, said Franklin, because many soldiers haven’t had to deal with anything like the situations they’re faced with at CMTC.

Hundreds of scenarios are played out early in the exercise, followed by a force-on-force exercise that combines all the training, Cuiper said.

“Each decision keys off another response,” he added. “If soldiers are told there’s going to be a fire, they have to react. If they miss a key

response, something else will happen.”

The training teaches them that whatever they do affects the next event, said 7th ATC spokeswoman Kathy Gibbs.

And there can be little doubt about who did what to whom. OCs are aware of everything that happens in training, Franklin said. “We observe, coach and offer advice. We’re the mentors.”

Real-time, digital video captures the actions soldiers take and the remarks they make during the training events.

Additionally, every vehicle is fitted with MILES equipment, and Global Positioning System equipment places all vehicles on a computer screen so OCs know exactly where they are in the maneuver area at any given time.

Leaders periodically conduct after-action reviews so soldiers have the opportunity to correct mistakes in follow-on scenarios.

At the end of each day, every unit receives a multimedia presentation so soldiers can see exactly what they did right and wrong and concentrate on making improvements that could save their lives in Kosovo — or wherever else they might be deployed. □



**COL Clinton T. Anderson (left), the 3rd Bde. commander, talks with roleplayers acting as members of the press following a “Serb demonstration.”**